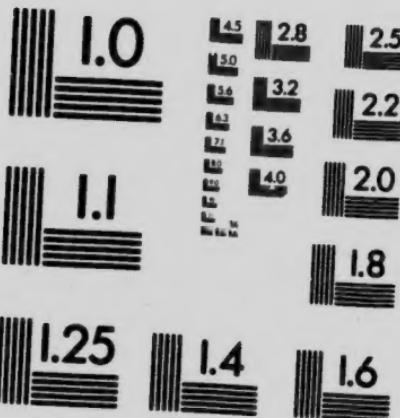


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## SPEECH BY SIR RICHARD McBRIDE

IN MOVING THE SECOND READING  
OF

# The Pacific Great Eastern Bill

Mr. Speaker, in rising to move the second reading of the bill now before Parliament, I desire to make a few brief explanations, first respecting the new mileage proposed to be aided, and next in regard to the additional guarantee to be provided for the first section of the road between North Vancouver and Fort George.

Had I been in a position two years ago to anticipate the increased cost of construction as well as the money stringency, I might have been able to advise Parliament better with regard to the guarantee first arranged. Failing that, however, and counting upon a continuance of normal conditions, the bill as enacted two years ago was the best under the circumstances the Provincial Government could submit.

I am fortunate in being able to say that, despite the unlooked for conditions, the company behind this project has been most active in its operations and that no time has been lost in proceeding with the business of construction in a most substantial way.

The route of the Pacific Great Eastern is one which for years past has been the subject of a great deal of investigation as well as considerable controversy. Several charters have been issued for standard gauge railways through the section of country presently to be traversed by this line. Honourable gentlemen may recall, with little or no difficulty, the fact that not only Federal but Provincial charters have been issued for the past twenty-five years bearing upon a section of British Columbia that will be opened up by the construction of the Pacific Great Eastern. But it was not until a

local syndicate, the Howe Sound & Pemberton Meadows Railway Company, commenced the construction of a small mileage some five years ago that the subject of railway building to the Interior from Vancouver by way of Squamish became a live issue. Then it was through the influence and courage exhibited by some prominent Vancouver people that a considerable expenditure of money was made upon construction from the head of Howe Sound towards the Interior in the building of a small mileage of standard gauge track. After the construction had proceeded a few miles, two branch lines were built to accelerate the lumber industry in the district, but with the exception of these works nothing more was carried out.

We found, as a Government, when we approached the project involved in the Pacific Great Eastern that there were many and difficult complications ahead because of the numerous Federal and Provincial charters outstanding. There was the Vancouver, Westminster & Yukon charters, which carried with it the Federal subvention for a mileage of upwards of 150 miles with surveys through to Fort George. There was also the Howe Sound & Pemberton Meadows Company, and other corporations as well, seeking rights and charters for the same ground.

There was no intention on the part of the Province to injure any legitimate investments made in railway construction in this portion of the country, but there was always the determination on the part of the Government that from the moment we might attack the enterprise we should

lose no time and spare no effort in pressing on with it in a businesslike way, so that within a reasonable period of time we would be able to go to the people of British Columbia with some tangible results.

There was more than an ordinary reason for this, because, while in the days gone by that vast and resourceful territory lying along the Squamish and Upper Fraser Valleys and off into the Chilcotin and Fort George country seemed to invite the private exploitation of railway building, there was also the new national transcontinental railway from the Yellowhead Pass to Prince Rupert to be considered as well. There was the absolute necessity imposed upon us to provide contact between the Southern zone of country and the national transcontinental, if we proposed to extend to the people of British Columbia all the advantages that they were entitled to expect from the operation of the railroad systems of the country.

And, Mr. Speaker, no time has been lost. The various complications have been fairly dealt with. In respect to the project of the Howe Sound & Pemberton Meadows Railway Syndicate we were face to face with the strong protest of these people against any trespass on the part of the Pacific Great Eastern corporation on the territory which they regarded as their own. So that their investment might be protected and so that the Pacific Great Eastern might be induced to make use of the trackage already provided, the company, in conference with all the interests involved, succeeded in making arrangements which entitled the new company to take over the old trackage and make it part and parcel of their system.

There have been other difficult problems to solve in connection with this charter, -but I am glad to be able to advise the House tonight that all of them have been satisfactorily dealt with. The public interest has been served and the Pacific Great Eastern corporation has been placed in a position that would enable it to press on with its undertaking.

At the present time there are 4,000 men engaged in the work of construction along this line, distributed for the most part between Squamish and Clinton. Surveys for the entire line to Fort George have been completed

and everything is in readiness for the letting of contracts between Clinton and Fort George, and it is the intention of the company, within the next sixty or ninety days, to have the greater part, if not all, of the mileage from Clinton to Fort George covered with workmen and the business of construction well in hand. If the estimates that have been submitted are correct, I am able to tell the House tonight that by mid-Winter of next year, say February, 1915, the gradient between the cities of North Vancouver and Fort George will be completed, and most of it will be covered with trackage. In addition to this, within the next three or four months, rails will be laid continuously from Squamish to Clinton and a train service will be installed over that section of the line. There is a portion of the road between Squamish and Horse Shoe Bay that means very heavy construction work. The character of the country there is extremely mountainous, and I am advised that every foot of the thirty or more miles of it will mean the most expensive kind of rock work. It is explained that this mileage, which will cost on the average about \$100,000 a mile to construct, has not been attacked so far because it was not deemed the most economic policy to pursue to invest so much money in mileage that could not possibly be revenue-producing until the other sections were built.

Now, sir, the whole of this mileage is accessible from tide water and it is quite feasible to arrange for the distribution of gangs of workmen throughout its entire length, and in doing so to practically guarantee that by the end of the year, or at all events early next Spring, the entire section will be completed and we can count upon having a continuous grade from North Vancouver right through to the City of Fort George.

There are one or two points which I think it my duty to mention while this part of the line is under consideration. First and foremost, I would direct the attention of the House to the necessity for early action in regard to the construction of the bridge at the Second Narrows. The obligations of the Pacific Great Eastern impose upon the company a direct connection with the City of Vancouver, and it is generally admitted that the route must cross Burrard Inlet at the Second

Narrows. I regret to have to report that, while the Provincial Government has provided a subvention of \$100,000, and while the Federal Government has made an estimate of \$350,000, and while large municipal subventions of the City of Vancouver and neighbouring municipalities have also been arranged, to date practically nothing beyond the drawing of the plans and the calling for tenders has been accomplished.

I do not wish to find fault with any of the interests affected by the Second Narrows bridge proposals, because the Provincial Government has invariably given it out as its policy that the general public interest would best be served if the structure were built at the Second Narrows under the control of any corporation, independent of all of them, but of sufficient proportions and strength to be used by all the railway companies upon fair terms, and with adequate provision for foot and vehicular traffic, not subject to tolls.

The plans of Sir John Wolfe Barry, the most eminent London engineer, were expected by some of the board, if not all of them, to be adopted, but it was disclosed on a careful investigation that to have attempted to proceed with the building of the bridge on the plans of Sir John Wolfe Barry would have meant an expenditure of at least two and a half million dollars; and in considering the nature of the undertaking, the fact that the company was an independent one and that it would demand all those various subsidies and subventions for sufficient financial support to go on with the undertaking, seemed to weigh materially against the effective inauguration of the work.

The project has, in consequence, been deferred, and the Government has been compelled by the various interests to step in and become more closely associated with the enterprise. The Federal Administration, through the Vancouver Member, Mr. Stevens, would appear to take the ground that the bridge must be owned and controlled by this private corporation.

For the Government to undertake a responsibility that would involve us in a very heavy work and, of necessity, a very costly one, has not so far commended itself to the Government, but at the same time we are anxious to see the bridge built, because we realize that on general principles it ought to be built and also because of the

programme of the Pacific Great Eastern, in which we are deeply interested. Then again, the Canadian Pacific Railway is said to be anxious to get a train service in North Vancouver, and I have not the slightest doubt in my mind that the Canadian Northern will be seeking the same privilege, so that, no matter from what viewpoint the subject is approached, there is considerable urgency in the case and the work must be gone on with.

So far as I propose to go in associating this matter with the Pacific Great Eastern subventions, I should like to say that the tunnel and bridge company and the Pacific Great Eastern can both rely on the best offices of the Government to assist in pressing on with the work in any manner consistent with the public interest and the position we have taken throughout. I see no reason why, within the next three or four months, some real and energetic means may not be devised whereby it can be demonstrated to the people of Burrard Inlet particularly, and the people of British Columbia generally, that this long-looked for bridge is presently to become an actuality, and that the train service proposed by the Pacific Great Eastern will be through to Vancouver very shortly after the line is completed from Fort George into North Vancouver.

In addition to this question, and affecting the first section of the road, you will observe that, while the mileage treated was originally 450 miles, in the Act now before the House it is stated to be 480 miles. We undertook to provide for this additional thirty miles the same guarantee that covers the 450 miles. The official returns give the length of the road at 480 miles, and this accounts for the change from the original proposal.

When the bill of 1912 was submitted to the House the estimated cost of construction was in the neighborhood off \$45,000 a mile. The figures as reported now would make the construction cost at the rate of \$58,000 throughout the whole work, or a total of \$27,840,000 for the line. This will leave, raising the guarantee, as the bill proposes, to \$42,000 per mile, \$16,000 a mile to be found by the Pacific Great Eastern, or \$7,680,000 altogether.

The character of the country through which the line passes is not so rugged

for the most part as that traversed by the Canadian Northern. With the exception of some mileage around Howe Sound there are no physical conditions quite so prohibitive on the Pacific Great Eastern as those presented on the Canadian Northern Pacific, one section of which, in the vicinity of Savona's Prairie, is costing in the neighborhood of \$101,000 a mile. Nor is it proposed on the Pacific Great Eastern, nor would the character of the country permit it, to have the same easy and economic gradients that are to be found on the Canadian Northern. In a large measure, Mr. Speaker, the Pacific Great Eastern has been treated by Parliament and the country as a colonization line, where in the usual course of events there are not to be found the same finished structures in the way of bridges, and the same heavy roadbed for traffic that you will find on the well standardized railway. But the point I want to make clear is that while the original obligation of the Pacific Great Eastern actually obliges that road to build on a standard equal to the Canadian Northern between Winnipeg and Edmonton, it is desired by this corporation, an independent and local pioneer colonization corporation, to make the best of the investment and to offer the best trackage that conditions will permit between the Peace River and the City of Vancouver.

The country thus traversed has been dealt with by me before now. I referred to the section between Fort George and the City of Vancouver when I introduced this policy to the House two years ago. I pointed out at the time that there would appear to be from Squamish to Fort George a section of the Province equal to the highest agricultural and mineral development. The Squamish district, despite its many handicaps, had already proved that it was a most up-to-date district. The reports from miners and prospectors who went into the country were all of the most gratifying and encouraging nature. Pemberton Meadows and the nearby vicinity, since the earliest days of settlement in the country has been regarded as one of the richest agricultural zones that we possess. Lillooet had already proven its worth in the way of fruits and other products, which were brought to Vancouver in competition with the products of the Okanagan and other

interior sections. As for the valley of the Fraser, the Cariboo district, Fort George and Chilcotin Country, it would be difficult for me to add to the accounts that have already been given by men well versed in the subject they speak of. It has been my privilege for many sessions to listen to the speeches of the Members for Cariboo and other districts of the Province as to the wonderful possibilities for agricultural development, and on several occasions I have been fortunate enough to look over the territory myself and to be satisfied as to what that resourcefulness can and must mean presently when, through the operations of the Pacific Great Eastern, it has an opportunity of expressing itself.

As to the lead mines of the Cariboo, I think their latent wealth is a matter of record and that, given an opportunity in the shape of proper transportation facilities, they will do much toward giving British Columbia the place she has a right to occupy. There is abundance of evidence to show that the lead deposits are numerous and of such a character as will undoubtedly attract universal attention.

This brings me to Fort George itself, where, instead of still pressing on into a veritable pioneer district, the Pacific Great Eastern, when it makes contact with the limits of the place, will be at once brought into touch with the national transcontinental. If there was nothing else to justify the building of this road to Vancouver than the construction of the national transcontinental, I think that circumstance in itself would be ample; and when we couple with that fact the wondrous wealth of the intervening territory that lies between Fort George and the City of Vancouver, we have such a complete and fascinating story that it would be difficult indeed for any person interested in the Province to refrain from going into ecstasies over the possibilities of development.

While I cannot claim for the Pacific Great Eastern the same status as a railway corporation that is occupied today by the Canadian Northern, I can say that the Government was careful enough to see before committing itself to this corporation that there was no uncertainty as to its backing and traffic arrangements with the Grand Trunk Pacific. Reference to the Provincial Acts of 1912 will show that there is

an agreement entered into by the Attorney-General of British Columbia, which provides that a branch line of the Grand Trunk Pacific from Moncton to Fort George and from intervening points, destined for Vancouver, will reach the commercial metropolis of the country over the lines of the Pacific Great Eastern. Here is a combination of conditions that ought to make honourable gentlemen rest satisfied that there is ample security to the treasury of British Columbia for every dollar guaranteed to be paid.

Dealing with the line from Grand Forks to the North opens up at once a new vista of possibilities. We have on record in our archives and in our various departments many different accounts of the Peace River Country, some of them extending back over fifty years. Many of them are most interesting, but they all deal with the same theme, namely, the wealth of that country. I have yet to hear one single word that has been said in favour of the development of this zone without having that word associated with the building of a railway. It is this that the Government now proposes to provide. We have watched with increasing interest the settlement of the Peace River Country, and we are advised on authority that in one part of it several hundred people settled there this year. We hear from reliable sources at Edmonton that people are going into the part of the country not in hundreds, . in thousands. It is common knowledge that there is a very considerable settlement there today. It is equally well known that, with a view to having their share in the benefits to be derived, the Government of Alberta has very heavily assisted a road from Edmonton, whose terminal will be located in the Peace River Country, and whose operations must be designed to perform a very wholesome work in the expansion of that portion of Alberta and Northern British Columbia. Unquestionably, the Edmonton merchant is alive to the business of the Peace River Country, and he has every right to be. He would not be entitled to a part in the business unless he were a man fully alive to the possibilities of the right kind that might offer.

This is the reason, sir, why we should be spurred on to action. We should conceive it to be in the general public interest that the Province of British

Columbia should not be behind in the march of progress and should attack without delay the proposal to build a standard gauge road into the Peace River Country and give to the people of Vancouver and Victoria and the other Southern sections of the country every advantage that the pioneer section of British Columbia has right to expect from the growth of the new and great North.

The stories that come to us with regard to the Peace River Country make most interesting reading, but I would be trespassing upon the time of the House if I attempted to relate any of them. I wish to say, however, that they have a tremendous bearing upon the issue. The coal fields of the Peace River Country to be traversed by this road are of undoubted value and considerable extent, and upon proper development they promise to give to the world the greatest producing coal mines extant. The quality of the product is not surpassed anywhere, and our information is to the effect that there is an abundance of it.

We are advised, too, that the iron deposits of British Columbia are of an excellent commercial quality. Reports have come in recently which go to show that almost along the tracks of the line there are almost infinite iron deposits, from which the mineral may be brought presently to a point where, with fuel conditions warranting, we shall be able to turn out an iron product second to none on the continent of America.

But, in addition to coal and ore deposits, we have extensive grazing lands, wonderful timber belts and vast waterways. All of these things seem to me to offer an irresistible case that would more than justify the project to which the Government proposes in this bill to commit itself.

Since it has been reported to the Administration that in four months' time, or, at the most, six months, the main work of the Grand Trunk Pacific will have been completed, and upwards of four or five thousand men will have been discharged from their daily vocation, it will be a fortunate thing for the company and for these workmen as well that, without having to leave the Far North and seek a new field for their labours, they can at once apply them to the extension of the Pacific Great Eastern into the Peace River Country.

There is another aspect of the case that appeals to me strongly, especially for the last ten or twelve years, since I have frequently visited Northern British Columbia and Alaska, and that is the feasibility of extending the Pacific Great Eastern through the Peace River Country through the Yukon and thence to Alaska. If any person ten years ago had seriously committed himself to a statement that railroad construction of any considerable magnitude in Alaska would be feasible or commercially possible, he must at once have been condemned as a most irresponsible person. It was the habit at that time to refer to the Far North as, perhaps, a section of country reserved by Providence for the big game hunter.

I believe that the time has now come for the building of a railroad through Northern British Columbia to the Yukon and Alaska, and I may say that the authorities at Washington and Ottawa have both gone so far as to heartily endorse some project of co-operation in the building of this line. The extension of the Pacific Great Eastern into the Peace River Country will make a splendid initial step towards the construction of a North and South railway. From Fort George the line will go directly North to the Parsnip River, and this section of the line might ultimately be used as the first step in the proposed extension to Alaska.

The building of this railway would effectually put Alaska on the map, not only so far as the United States is concerned, but also so far as British Columbia is concerned, and at the same time it would link up a vast intervening territory of tremendous productive value. British Columbia occupies the unique position of being located between parts of the great Union of this continent, both to the North and the South, and, while the construction of this arterial line opens up tremendous possibilities for our cousins beyond the boundary line, yet we must not forget that it would develop country where enormous potential wealth is in the Northern area of this Province, and, incidentally, do more than anything else to cement the friendship and amity of the two great nations of this continent.

It seems to me that the Hon. Franklin K. Lane, Minister of the Interior for the United States, made an epoch in national, and even international, history when he secured the passage of a

bill appropriating \$35,000,000 for the development of a national railway system for Alaska. I have attempted to cultivate interest in the British Columbia-Yukon road, and since this Province is bound to profit materially by its construction, where should there be more interest in the matter than here in British Columbia?

Of course I wish it to be understood that the project for the Province to take up in a single handed manner at the present time is too expensive, but in saying that I am admitting the only possible reason for not pressing the project forward at once. The matter at present lies in the hands of the Governments at Washington and Ottawa, and it is in their power to give life to this idea and secure its splendid fulfilment within the next five years. I do not wish to be understood as promulgating a political platform on this subject. To my mind there is no reason in the world why Liberals and Conservatives alike should not combine on this great issue and press forward the undertaking to the utmost of their power. It is a matter of record that in connection with the Hudson Bay Railway, members of both parties were agreed as to the justification for the line, and it was largely through their united effort that the project became an accomplished fact. I do not hesitate to say, however, that the opening of the British Columbia, Yukon and Alaska Railroad will be ten times more valuable than the completion of the Hudson Bay line. We pride ourselves on the Northern area of our Province, but what good is it all to us if it is left undeveloped, and I claim that development can only take place by the extension of our North and South lines.

In a very short time we shall be celebrating the Centenary of Peace on this continent. I regard that as a great and inspiring epoch, and I would like to say in connection with it that I can imagine no more fitting way of celebrating this festival than by the consummation of the arrangements of rights involved in a project to undertake the construction of a line under a joint high commission.

It is a good thing for us to hold sacred some shrine in old England, to erect a tablet in the crypt of St. Paul's or to make other proper monuments and memorials, but to my mind nothing could be more lasting or impressive as

a proof of our strong faith in the continuance of peace that a railway, operated mutually under commission by both nations, to which we could point as an example of our friendliness every day of the year.

Our relations with the United States are admirable at the present time, and I see no reason why they should undergo any change. In the past they have been tested, and I am satisfied that on both sides the test has been borne in the most honourable and satisfying manner. Not so very long ago we were asked to enter upon a trade pact, and I need not recite to you the circumstances of that unfortunate venture in politics on this side of the line, but do venture the opinion that nothing has done more to cement the friendship existing between the two nations of Canada and the United States than the defeat of the reciprocal contract. It showed our cousins that we stand on our own responsibilities and that, while we rejoice in the prosperity of the United States, yet we respect and love all the more the land in which we live and the flag which we have been taught to honour.

I will not conceal from you my personal hope that the building of the Peace River branch of the Pacific Great Eastern may be the means of bringing the larger issue to fruition. It is a large issue, and on that account it has been criticized by people who are apt to think that this country is progressing too rapidly. I have little patience

with pessimists at any time, and particularly in regard to the prospects and destiny of this Province. This Western country is undoubtedly large, and it must depend for its development upon men of large and broad ideas and not upon the men who are content to live from day to day as may be done in older and settled countries.

Apart altogether from the commercial aspect of this international road there is a phase of considerable importance that I would like to refer to in a single word. It is with regard to the strategic importance of such a line. I will simply point out to you the fact that from the Gulf of California to Cook's Inlet there are practically no fortifications to speak of on the entire Pacific Coast, and, as you are aware, there is no fleet to protect our trade from possible marauders. It will take generations to provide fortifications and even longer to provide navies, but the building of this line is not a difficult task, nor a very expensive one, and I believe that nothing would be more welcomed to the departments interested at Ottawa, Washington and London than the proposal to establish such a railroad.

Mr. Speaker, I have detained the House longer than was my intention, but I think you will agree with me that the importance of the matter is my best justification. I leave the matter in your hands, and trust that it will engage your serious attention.